

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2157
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONGEN MONTREAL
AMCONGEN TORONTO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, TD
SUBJECT: BWIA-ALPA CONCILIATION EFFORTS COLLAPSE

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 708 AND PREVIOUS

1. EFFORTS TO BRING BWIA AND ITS STRIKING PILOTS TOGETHER
BY CONCILIATION THROUGH THE INDUSTRIAL COURT BROKE DOWN
COMPLETELY JKD TERMINATED AS OF MARCH 13. ACCORDING TO
PILOT SOURCE, THE COMPANY HAD INCREASED ITS PRECONDITIONS
FOR TALKING BACK ITS DISMISSED PILOTS DURING THE ABORTIVE
CONCILIATION PROCESS, WITH THE RESULT THAT BWIA AND THE
AIRLINE PILOTS' ASSOCIATION (ALPA) WERE FURTHER APART AT
THE END THAN THEY HAD BEEN EARLIER. SPECIFIC ISSUES
WILL BE TAKEN UP IN THE INDUSTRIAL COURT MARCH 17 FOR
HEARING AND ARBITRATION. THE GOTT HAS HAD NOTHING
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FURTHER TO SAY ON THE AIRLINE SITUATION SINCE THE
MARCH 2 STATEMENT (REFTEL).

2. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE BWIA DISPUTE AND
RELATED MATTERS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION, REPRESENTING

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT, HAS BEEN SEEKING A MEETING WITH BWIA MANAGEMENT TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE AIRLINE'S 1,500 GROUND EMPLOYEES SINCE FEBRUARY 9. THE COMPANY HAS NOT AGREED TO SUCH A MEETING THUS FAR.

B. GOTT HAS NAMED A SPECIAL TEAM, HEADED BY MINISTER AT LARGE BASIL PITT, TO LOOK INTO THE REVAMPING OF T&T'S AIR SERVICES INCLUDING A POSSIBLE REORGANIZATION OF EXISTING AVIATION COMPANIES AND THE PURCHASE OF NEW LONG-RANGE AIRCRAFT, NOT EXCLUDING SUPERSONIC EQUIPMENT (SIC).

C. BWIA REPORTEDLY HAS "FURLOUGHED" SOME PERSONNEL IN ITS OFFICES ABROAD AND INFORMED ITS AGENTS THAT THERE WILL BE NO FLIGHTS BEFORE MARCH 31.

D. THE THREE BWIA DC-9S HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO TTAS (SEE REFTTEL) AND TTAS IS RECRUITING PILOTS TO FLY THEM. PILOT SOURCES HAVE TOLD LABOFF THAT SOME ALPA MEMBERS HAVE BEEN UNDER DIRECT PRESSURE FROM BWIA TO ACCEPT SECONDMENT TO TTAS BUT THAT NONE HAS DONE SO THUS FAR.

E. THE PRESS HAS STEPPED UP ITS EDITORIAL CAMPAIGN TO HAVE THE PARTIES SETTLE THE COSTLY STRIKE AND GET THE PLANES FLYING AGAIN PROMPTLY. EDITORIAL COMMENT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH INITIALLY SUPPORTED BWIA, HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF WHAT IS SEEN AS GOVERNMENT RECALCITRANCE IN THE DISPUTE.

3. COMMENT. NO ONE WE HAVE TALKED WITH CLAIMS TO KNOW WHAT THE GOTT IS UP TO IN THE CURRENT STAGE OF THE IMPASSE. AS THE ULTIMATE ARBITER, PM WILLIAMS, MAINTAINS HIS SILENCE ON THE SUBJECT AND HIS SUBORDINATES FOLLOW SUITE, RUMORS OF INCREASING IN PROBABILITY SPRING UP, CIRCULATE AND GAIN AT LEAST SOME CREDENCE. THE GOVERNMENT MAY WELL BE SERIOUS ABOUT A GENERAL OVERHAUL AND, IN ANY CASE, HAS BEEN TALKING TO MANUFACTURERS FOR SOME TIME ABOUT WIDE-BODIED AIRCRAFT. BUT THE APPOINTMENT OF THE PITT COMMISSION COULD ALSO BE A PLOY. NEEDLESS TO SAY, INCLUSION OF THE SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT ALTERNATIVE DREW SOME INCREDULOUS LOOKS, EVEN FROM VETERAN ERIC WILLIAMS' WATCHERS.
FOX

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